Men-at-Arms

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The Australian Army at War 1976–2016

Leigh Neville • Illustrated by Peter Dennis

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The Australian Army at War 1976–2016

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THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY AT WAR 1976–2016

A typical 'digger' of the 1970s–80s, clothed in 'jungle greens' and armed with the 7.62x51mm L1A1 Self Loading Rifle ('SLR'). Small numbers of the 5.56x45mm M16A1 were also available for scouts and signallers. Under-barrel grenade launchers like the XM-148 and later M203 were used by Special Forces and recon/ sniper platoons, but the primary grenade launcher in infantry battalions was the standalone American 40mm M79, which the diggers called the 'wombat gun'. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo WO2 Craig Murphy)

'THE DIGGERS' – A BRIEF HISTORY[1]

For readers unfamiliar with the Australian Army, the briefest summary of its history may be useful, to provide a context for the specific subject of this book.

White settlers only arrived in Australia from Britain in 1788, and the first European armed force on Australian soil was a small unit of Royal Marines. This was soon replaced by a British-recruited New South Wales Corps, which from 1810 was replaced in its turn by successive postings of British Line battalions until 1870. However, from early in the colony's history volunteer self-defence units were raised by most of its constituent states and territories. A contingent from New South Wales even deployed to the Sudan in 1885, and a volunteer mounted force, totalling some 16,000 men in 57 local contingents, later fought in South Africa in 1899–1902. These Sudan and Boer War deployments became the first battle honours awarded to the Australian Army when it was officially formed in 1901, following the federation of Australia's separate states into a unified Commonwealth of Australia.

In August 1914 Australia loyally followed Great Britain into World War I, but the 1903 Defence Act limited the operations of the Permanent Force to the direct defence of the homeland. Consequently, an additional and much larger volunteer Australian Imperial Force (AIF) had to be raised to serve overseas. After training in Egypt, the combined Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) landed at Gallipoli on the Turkish coast on 25 April 1915, a date that would forever be commemorated as ANZAC Day.

After the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, the AIF were deployed in 1916 to the Western Front, where they served with notable distinction until

1 The exact origins of the term 'Digger' for an Australian soldier seem lost in the mists of time; the general consensus is that it appeared on the Western Front during the Great War. Volume IV of the Official History notes (perhaps to the surprise of modern Australians) that 'It was at this stage that the Australian soldiers – in particular, the infantry – came to be known, together with the New Zealanders, as "the Diggers". The term... hitherto *had been general only among the New Zealanders*, who are said to have inherited it from the gum-diggers of their country. It ... spread like fire through the AIF, and by the end of the year [1917] was the general term of address *for Australian or New Zealand soldiers*' (present author's italics).

The 106mm M40A2 recoilless rifle mounted on a ¼-ton Land Rover; this provided the core light anti-tank capability for both the armoured corps and infantry battalions until the introduction of the MILAN ATGM in 1978. Mechanized infantry also routinely carried the 84mm M2 Carl Gustav (aka 'Charlie Guts-Ache', due to its impressive recoil), which still soldiers on in its modernized M3 variant. The MILAN was replaced in its turn in the early 2000s with the FGM-148 Javelin ATGM. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo WO2 Craig Murphy)

the Armistice. Simultaneously, an Australian mounted division plus three ANZAC mounted brigades were also prominent in the British victory over the Turkish Army in the Middle East. The Australian War Memorial, keeper of Australian military history, notes: 'From a population of fewer than five million, 416,809 men enlisted, of whom more than 60,000 were killed and 156,000 wounded, gassed, or taken prisoner'. Australia's disproportionate contribution during the Great War became, to some extent, the unified country's 'foundation legend'.

In September 1939, Australia again followed Britain in declaring war on Germany; the deployment restrictions still applied, so the 2nd AIF was formed. Several Australian divisions served in Greece and Crete, the Middle East and North Africa, including in the garrison of besieged Tobruk and among the victors at El Alamein. In the Pacific, following Pearl Harbor in December 1941 a joint American–British–Dutch East Indies–Australian command (ABDACOM) was activated in January 1942. After the fall of Singapore in mid-February the lightning Japanese advances were finally halted by Australian forces at Milne Bay in Papua New Guinea in August–September 1942 – the first time that the Imperial Japanese Army had been defeated in battle and forced to abandon an objective. The Australians eventually pushed the Japanese invasion force back over the Owen Stanley mountains after the brutal battle for the Kokoda Track, but the New Guinea campaign continued for Australian forces until the end of the war. Their last campaign before Japan's surrender in August 1945 was the recapture of Borneo.

The Australian Army served in Korea with the United Nations in 1950–54, and later continued to deploy alongside the British Army in regional conflicts, in Malaya in the 1950s and during the Indonesian 'Confrontation' in Borneo and Malaysia in the 1960s. Soon afterwards, the first Australian advisers arrived in South Vietnam. Regular forces were also soon deployed, with the first Australian infantry battalion arriving in 1965. The Australians would continue to serve in roughly brigade strength in South Vietnam until 1972, earning a reputation as a highly professional force which exploited to advantage its long experience in jungle warfare and counter-insurgency. The war in Vietnam was controversial at home, however, and this led Australian governments to avoid participation in exterior conflicts for many years thereafter. Instead, a reduced Australian Army concentrated on its original role in an ever-more unlikely scenario: the defence of the Australian homeland against foreign invasion.

* * *

The high-level structure of the Army follows a basically British pattern, divided into a number of corps – for example, the Royal Australian Armoured Corps, Royal Australian Infantry Corps, Royal Australian Corps

of Transport, etc. Operational command is spread between Headquarters Forces Command, Headquarters 1st Division and Special Operations Command (SOCOMD); these replaced the functionality-based Land Command, Training Command and Logistics Command following the 2008 'Adaptive Army' initiative.

Prior to 2012 the effective assignment of combat brigades to 1st Div HQ for sustained overseas operations was hampered by their 'functional' organization as either Mechanized (1st Bde), Light (3rd Bde) or Motorized (7th Bde), only one of these being deployment-ready at any one time. For example, the 1999 East Timor deployment saw a scramble to support 3rd Bde with a hodgepodge of units from all over Australia, and still lacked some key capabilities. For organizational details, and the major reforms introduced since East Timor, see 'Current & Future Operational Structures' on pages 38–42.

The Army comprises both Regular and Reserve units. Throughout its 21st-century campaigns the latter have also served overseas either as formed units, or as reinforcements or specialist-capability support for regular deployments. Typically, governments have been unwilling to commit reservists to the most high-tempo war-fighting, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, but they have been heavily employed in peacekeeping roles.

THE LONG PEACE

Small-scale peacekeeping and training deployments

At the time of the withdrawal from Vietnam the Australian government proclaimed that they would 'never again send troops to fight in Asian mainland wars', and indeed, the Australian Army did not fire a shot in anger between 1973 and 1993. Rumours of occasional classified Special Forces deployments notwithstanding, the political mandate was for the defence of Australia to the exclusion of all else. A number of Defence White Papers, the first in 1976 and reiterated in 1987, made this the sole focus, with only the briefest mention of the possibility of the Army supporting allies in overseas operations. This attitude understandably troubled Australia's longtime ally, the United States.

The Army itself suffered from dwindling budgets in the post-Vietnam draw-downs. Three infantry battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment were amalgamated (2RAR and 4RAR became 2/4RAR; 5RAR and 7RAR became 5/7RAR; and 8RAR and 9 RAR became 8/9RAR). This reduced the Army to six understrength regular infantry battalions, with a greater focus placed on the Army Reserve to 'take up the slack'. Even the vaunted Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) were under threat of disbandment.

A signaller deployed in support of the UNAMIC mission to Cambodia in 1992 wears the distinctive UN blue beret, and the 'AUSCAM' or Disruptive Pattern Camouflage Uniform (DPCU) which slowly replaced the 'jungle green' fatigues from the mid-1980s. He appears to have an early Raven DPCU radio pack. Note on his left shoulder, above the UN badge, a round yellow patch edged in red, bearing a black bounding kangaroo set on a green map of Australia, above red lettering. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Cpl Wayne Ryan)

An infantry staff sergeant (note black crown and chevrons) keeps a wary eye on the locals in Baidoa, Somalia, during Operation 'Solace', 1992–94. He has a DPCU cover on his American PASGT (Personnel Armour System for Ground Troops) helmet, and, over his DPCU uniform, the olive-drab PASGT Interim Small Arms Protective Overvest (ISAPO) body armour which replaced the outdated M69. He carries the 5.56x45mm F88 rifle (aka the 'AusSteyr') with integral 1.5 magnification optic. This Australian variant of the Austrian Steyr AUG replaced the SLR and M16A1 in 1987 as the standard individual weapon of the Australian Army. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Cpl Gary Ramage)

During this period, known within the Army as 'the Long Peace', a soldier's only hope for an operational deployment came from a number of small-scale peacekeeping commitments. Australia had a long tradition of providing personnel to support such efforts – its first such deployment was to Indonesia as early as 1947. In the Middle East, the Army rotated soldiers through the Sinai under Operation 'Mazurka', the still on-going Australian contribution to the Multinational Force & Observers (MFO) that monitor the Israeli–Egyptian ceasefire. Australians also served with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) based in Israel. A small number of Australian soldiers were also sent to Uganda in 1982–84 to serve with the Commonwealth Military Training Team Uganda (CMTTU), a rotational 36-man element tasked with training the new Uganda National Liberation Army following the fall of Idi Amin's dictatorship. The CMTTU had the distinction of receiving the first issue of the trials version of 'AUSCAM' – or to use its official title, Disruptive Pattern Camouflage Uniform (DPCU) – which would later replace the Vietnam-era 'jungle greens' then worn by Australian soldiers.

With the thawing of the Cold War in 1990, the Australian Army was in a similar position to many Western armies. With politicians eager to exploit the much-trumpeted 'peace dividend', would the Army see yet another reduction in budgets, personnel and assets? However, the First Gulf War in 1991 saw a small Australian Army contingent deployed to provide close surface-to-air missile defence for warships of the Royal Australian Navy in the Gulf, heralding the possibility of future Coalition operations.

UNAMIC/UNTAC: Cambodia, 1991–93

The 1990s ushered in a number of larger-scale peacekeeping operations. The first was the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC), to which Australia was a major contributor. After the withdrawal of invading Vietnamese forces from Cambodia in 1989, this 1991 mission strove to police the ceasefire and ensure disarmament of competing militias, including the infamous Khmer Rouge. In 1992 UNAMIC became the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), of which the military element was commanded by an Australian lieutenant-general. The noted Australian historian David Horner recorded in the Official History: 'UNTAC was the largest UN peacekeeping mission to that time … tasked with the complex mandate of working with the four Cambodian factions to implement the Paris Peace Agreement.' It was also dangerous: the Australian contingent commander, LtCol Russell Stuart, was himself wounded by ground fire when travelling over disputed territory in a UN helicopter.

More than 600 Australian soldiers were deployed to UNTAC at any one time. A number of S-70 Black Hawk helicopters from 5 Aviation Regt were despatched to support security operations in the run-up to Cambodia's first free elections in 40 years, protected by an infantry platoon from D Co, 2/4RAR. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) also

contributed to an extensive de-mining programme. UNTAC was not without its hazards: an Australian signaller (Gnr Trent Prince of the RAA) was captured by the Khmer Rouge along with a number of Thai and Pakistani soldiers, and held for eight hours before being released thanks to Thai Army negotiators. Additionally, three Australian service personnel were wounded by enemy fire.

Operation 'Solace': Somalia, 1992–94

Next came Somalia, which saw the largest deployment of Australian combat troops since Vietnam. As part of another peacekeeping operation under the auspices of the United Nations, the Australians initially deployed a 30-member Movement Control Unit in October 1992 under Operation 'Iguana'. This was followed by a much larger commitment, built around an infantry battalion task group from 1RAR with additional personnel from 2/4RAR, plus some 36 M113 armoured personnel carriers from B Sqn, 3rd/4th Cav Regt, a troop from 3rd Combat Engineer Regt (3CER), and supporting signals, intelligence and logistics personnel.

Australia's contribution was based around Baidoa in south-west Somalia. The job entailed not only ensuring security for humanitarian relief efforts but also classic CIMIC (civil-military cooperation) and COIN (counter-insurgency), helping to re-establish local law enforcement and community functions. The Australians had a good deal of success, and were generally appreciated by the Somali civilians. Sadly, the mission also saw the Army's first fatal casualty since Vietnam, when a young infantry lance-corporal was accidentally killed while on patrol. It was also the first time since Vietnam that Australian troops had engaged an enemy – in fact, 1RAR came under fire during their very first patrol in Baidoa. One Australian soldier described a later contact:

'In our first real contact, a Somali walked up behind one of our guys and went to shoot him in the back of the head [with a pistol]. A guy in our platoon saw it and shot the Somali. There was a bit of confusion as to what was going on – we were in the streets, and we didn't know where the shots were coming from. The guy that fired the shot was yelling that the Somali had bolted. We later found out that another Somali had picked up the pistol and run down the road.'

The Australians soon adapted to urban warfare against the militia gunmen. A section leader recalled that, after being engaged by heavy small-arms fire from a nearby building, he decided to deploy one of the 66mm M72 Light Anti-tank Weapons (LAW) carried by his section: 'So I deployed my other 66 from the No.1 rifleman behind me. I gave the section the order for rapid fire; he stuck his head out

A roadblock in Somalia, manned by an M113A1 'bucket' of B Sqn, 3rd/4th Cavalry Regt and diggers of 1RAR. The M113A1 has the Cadillac-Gage T-50 turret mounting a .30cal and a .50cal machine gun. The Army operated a number of M113 variants, including a unique Fire Support Vehicle (FSV); soon nicknamed 'The Beast', this mounted a Saladin armoured car 76mm-gun turret. A later variant had the turret from a Scorpion TRV. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Cpl Gary Ramage)

In the Mogadishu New Port facility in Somalia, infantrymen and Military Police dismount from a Land Rover. Note the ISAPO body armour, and the mixture of old American M1 steel and ballistic PASGT helmets. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia)

and fired the 66 and it went high on the building, but it caused rubble to come down on top of them and it injured four Somalis.'

The 1RAR Association records in its history of the 'Solace' deployment: 'Aggressive patrolling and convoy protection during the next months ensured the safe passage of over 400 convoys of essential supplies to the starving population. Contact with the enemy was usually fast, with the response from the Australians being decisive and deadly. During this time the battalion had contacts with Somali gunmen resulting in 7 enemies killed, 4 wounded and 70 taken prisoner and handed over to the Security Forces. This action also secured 935 weapons, and ensured the safe delivery of over 8,000 tons of aid supplies.'

May 1993 saw the 1RAR task group return to Australia as the initial United Nations mission (UNITAF, United Task Force) transitioned into the American-led UNOSOM II (United Nations Operation in Somalia II). A modest Australian presence was maintained; the 67-strong Australian Services Contingent (ASC) chiefly comprised air controllers and the Movement Control Unit. Although it was based in the comparative safety of Mogadishu Airport, a small detachment from J Troop, 3 Sqn SASR were deployed to provide security, along with two M113s on loan from UN forces. The SASR team soon nicknamed themselves 'the Gerbils' after the rodents which infested their hilltop base, itself christened the 'Eureka Stockade' after the site of a famous 19th-century rebellion. Along with protecting the ASC, the SASR team provided VIP protection and route security. The M113s were particularly useful, providing a protected movement capability. The commander of J Troop, WO2 Gary Kingston, related that 'the Gerbils soon became skilled in driving the APCs, and only cleaned up one goat, two Egyptian checkpoints and numerous militia roadblocks in the 7-month tour'.

One SASR soldier shot dead two Somali gunmen who raised their weapons threateningly. Kingston wrote after this incident that the troop noticed 'a marked increase of Somali weapon-discipline on the streets… [gunmen] now openly made an effort to turn their weapons away from Australian convoys.' With the draw-down of UNOSOM II the ASC returned to Australia, followed by J Troop a month later in November 1994.

Operation 'Tamar': Rwanda, 1994–95

In the aftermath of the horrendous inter-tribal genocide in Rwanda, Australia rotated two medical contingents under Operation 'Tamar'. The commander of an SASR element which deployed with the second rotation, WO2 Rod Scott, described the mission thus: 'The Australian Contingent's mission was to supply medical support to the UN Forces in Rwanda, and to conduct humanitarian assistance.'

The first Australian contingent arrived in August 1994, with the task of establishing an operating hospital largely from scratch. This Australian Medical Company (AMC) comprised just under 100 personnel drawn from all three services. They were equipped with the only functioning X-ray machine in Rwanda, and ran the only intensive-care ward in the country. Their case load was horrific, in terms of both numbers and the severity of the injuries presenting.

Colonel Beverly Wright, then deployed with the AMC as 2iC and senior nursing officer, later commented on the challenges facing them: 'An average week in hospital saw above- and below- knee amputations, grenade injuries, split skin grafts, delayed primary closure, debridement, injuries from motor vehicle accidents, gun-shot wounds, ventilated patients and a wide range of infectious diseases. Tuberculosis and malaria were prevalent, as were HIV and AIDS-related conditions.'

Protecting the medics was an infantry detachment comprising A Co, 2/4RAR with three attached M113A1s; retired CSM Nathan Vincent deployed as a 23-year-old digger:

'My role during this deployment was as a Section 2iC in A Co, 2/4 RAR deployed as part of the Australian Medical Support Force (AUSMED) under the command of LtCol Patrick McIntosh. Our role was to protect the Australian medical personnel operating out of the badly damaged Kigali Central Hospital and to support their operations in the region. As it was the first deployment for many of us, we found the experience very enlightening, especially as to the realities of civil war and how cheap life can be in Third World countries. We knew that we were going into a war zone and that there had been genocide committed on a grand scale, but in reality this did not prepare many of us for the images and the experiences we would be exposed to…

'We would either be deployed to guard the hospital or the contingent accommodation, out on the road with the contingent health inspectors visiting various UN compounds around the country, or assisting in the protection of medical staff at any one of the many refugee camps. Looking back on it now, I think the experiences set me up for life. I have never complained since about how bad our government is or about the services we receive here in Australia.'

The second contingent replaced them in February 1995, serving for an additional six months with infantry from B Co, 2RAR providing force protection. During this time one of the defining events of the Rwandan tragedy occurred: the massacre at Kibeho. Kibeho was a refugee camp in southern Rwanda that was officially

A section commander from A Co, 2/4RAR protecting a refugee camp in Rwanda, 1994–95, during deployment under a UN mandate. He wears a blue-painted PASGT Kevlar helmet, DPCUs, a UN brassard with added national flag patch, and the first issue of the brown general-purpose boots. His body armour is the old American M69, and he has acquired a chest-pouch rig to carry magazines for his F88 rifle. (Courtesy Nathan Vinson)

under UN protection; an element of Zambian troops was stationed there, along with non-government entities providing medical relief to the thousands of displaced persons living at the camp. The Australians arrived to provide further medical support.

The camp, housing Hutu refugees, was surrounded by Tutsi militiamen of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), and soon after the arrival of the vastly outnumbered Australian element the RPF began to massacre the refugees. The Australian infantry platoon commander made what was undoubtedly the toughest decision of his career by ordering his soldiers not to engage the RPF, for fear of hitting civilians and becoming embroiled in protracted combat that would probably result in Australian casualties and/or capture by the militiamen. However, the Australians did what they could to help the wounded, and repeatedly faced down the RPF to evacuate civilians from the killing site, including smuggling infants and children out. Patrol medic Cpl Paul Jordan of the SASR described what he witnessed:

'We saw about 100 people who had either been shot or macheted, or both. Their wounds were horrific and there was blood everywhere. One woman had been cleaved with a machete right through her nose down to her upper jaw. She sat silently and simply stared at us. There were numerous other people suffering from massive cuts to their heads, arms and all over their bodies. We immediately started to triage as many patients as possible, but just as we would begin to treat one patient, another would appear before us with far more serious injuries.'

Consequences of the 1994 Defence White Paper

Australia reduced its peacekeeping commitments after Somalia and Rwanda; experience on the ground had soured the government's appetite for what were in reality 'peace enforcement' missions. More change was also in the wind following the findings of the 1994 Defence White Paper; the amalgamated 2/4RAR was de-linked and the two battalions were re-raised. This was both to increase the number of infantry battalions, and to increase Australia's SOF (Special Operations Forces) capabilities, with 4RAR gradually transitioning into a Commando unit. A renewed focus was placed on the defence of Australia (often known colloquially as 'Defence of the North'), and the long-term plan called for a number of brigades to be relocated from the southern states to far north Queensland. The first unit had already relocated: 2nd Cav Regt had moved from Holsworthy, New South Wales to Darwin in the Northern Territory in 1992.

On 12 June 1996 the 'Black Hawk Disaster' occurred at a training area known as High Range, outside Townsville. During a counter-terrorist exercise, 'Day Rotor 96', two Black Hawks flying under night-vision conditions collided in mid-air. The crash took the lives of 15 members of 1 Sqn, SASR and three from B Sqn, 5 Aviation Regiment. For a small army, and an even smaller SOF and aviation community, it was a savage blow.

In 1997, 8/9RAR was officially removed from the order of battle following fiscal reductions. This seemed to fly in the face of a government report which identified three key tasks for the ADF and the Army going forward: 'Defeating attacks on Australia; defending Australia's regional interest; supporting Australia's global interests'. This last phrase was the first time since Vietnam that the possibility of deploying Australian

forces outside the immediate region was explicitly recognized; perhaps the hangover from Australia's involvement in Vietnam was finally easing? Indeed, a year later an Australian SOF element consisting of 1 Sqn, SASR along with a troop from NZSAS was deployed in support of Coalition forces in the Persian Gulf under Operation 'Pollard' (although, after Iraq agreed to renewed weapons inspections, they returned to Australia without seeing action).

TURNING-POINT: EAST TIMOR, 1999–2005

Indonesia, one of Australia's closest northern neighbours, rules the western half of the island of Timor. In November 1975 the eastern half of the island, formerly a Portuguese colony, declared its independence, but Indonesia immediately claimed it as a province. In December the Indonesian military (TNI) invaded East Timor, carrying out widespread killings of civilians and murdering several Australian journalists. This, and continued massacres of perhaps as many as 200,000 East Timorese over two decades, caused an international outcry and placed significant strain on the relationship between Australia and Indonesia, but in the aftermath of Vietnam wider geopolitics prevented any stronger response. However, after the fall of Indonesia's President Suharto in 1998, Australian Prime Minister John Howard called on Suharto's successor to hold a plebiscite on Timorese autonomy – which was, surprisingly, agreed.

The United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), including some Australian military and police personnel, deployed to oversee the referendum. On 30 August 1999 nearly 80 per cent of East Timorese voted for independence, arousing fury among those with strong ties to Indonesia. These elements formed armed militias, overtly assisted by members of the TNI, and carried out brutal attacks on civilians; hundreds were killed, and many thousands displaced from their homes. During September 1999, while the Royal Australian Air Force evacuated endangered foreigners, the USA and the UN endorsed a multinational intervention to protect the establishment of East Timor's independent nationhood. While the US would provide naval and logistic support it would not commit troops, and requested that Australia should take the lead. Historically, this would prove a significant turning-point for the Australian Defence Force.

This is one of two prototype Bushmaster PMVs deployed to Com in East Timor in 1999 (at that date they were known as Infantry Mobility Vehicles – note number plate 'IMV-B3'). The Bushmasters were assigned to ferry media around, often protected by a contingent from 4RAR. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Sgt W. Guthrie)

Operations 'Spitfire', 'Warden' & 'Stabilise'

The initial plan, codenamed Operation 'Spitfire', was for the evacuation of foreign nationals including the UN monitors, to begin on 6 September. The RAAF evacuated some 2,475 UNAMET officials and

An M113A1 and SASR Land Rovers in East Timor, October 1999. The troopers carry the 5.56x45mm M4A1 carbine (known confusingly as the M4A5 in Australia) with attached M203 grenade launchers and flashlights, and wear privately purchased Camelbak water bladders. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo WO2 Green)

others under the protection of a small, discreetly armed SASR element. B Company of 3RAR were despatched three times to the waters off Timor in preparation for a seaborne evacuation, only to be ordered to return to Darwin as diplomacy continued. On 15 September the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1264, supporting 'the establishment of a multinational force under a unified command structure to restore peace and security in East Timor, to protect and support the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) and to facilitate humanitarian assistance operations'. Days later the Australian-led International Force East Timor (INTERFET) was announced, and the Army's 3rd Brigade along with SOF elements were assigned the task.

Historians Bob Breen and Greg McCauley recorded (present author's abbreviations) that 'At the time of its inception, the 3rd Bde in Townsville *was* INTERFET. Brigadier Mark Evans chose to take the 2nd Bn, Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR) from Townsville and was [also] assigned 3RAR; LtCol Simon Gould's 5/7RAR was assigned for later deployment. C Squadron, 2nd Cav Regt had been warned some time before and was ready to go. This would be the first overseas mission for the new Australian-modified Light Armoured Vehicles (ASLAV).' A participant recalled C Sqn, 2nd Cav Regt's first realization that an operation was likely:

'We did a major (Division-plus) exercise down in the desert – a huge, barren place called Epenarra Station – which had a bit of an awkward exercise design – mostly warfighting serials, but every now and then a random peacekeeping serial. About [two-thirds of the way] through that we stopped getting tyres (which an ASLAV regiment absolutely runs on), which we all thought was a logistics problem – but I realized later was HQ AST [HQ Australian Theatre] turning off the tap' [as part of the wider effort to resource the upcoming operation].

'Got back to barracks, did this utterly random NBC [nuclear, biological and chemical] and then riot-control training – not so random now in retrospect! My squadron then headed out to Mount Bundey, and this was when we knew something was up; got to the range gate and [were] met by the RTA [Regimental Technical Adjutant] and the Regimental

Training Sergeant with the simple "Troop Leader, here for orders; Troop Sergeant, there for ammo…". [We] drove out onto the range live [with ammunition loaded] and red flags [denoting live fire] with only one safety vehicle, and orders to fire when we saw targets. As soon as that happened, I knew it was on.'

On 20 September 1999, Australian troops landed by RAAF C-130 Hercules at Komoro Airport outside East Timor's capital, Dili, under Operation 'Warden'. The first wave was from 3 Sqn, SASR and a small commando contingent from 4RAR, followed by A and C Cos, 2RAR supported by a pair of M113A1 APCs from B Sqn, 3rd/4th Cav. The SASR, along with elements from the NZSAS and the British Special Boat Service (SBS), and a contingent from the British Army's Royal Gurkha Rifles, quickly secured the airport for follow-on elements.

A Company relieved the SASR and their international colleagues (known as Response Force, RESPFOR), who then fanned out from the airport and moved into Dili to dissuade any further slaughter. C Company, 2RAR were tasked to reconnoitre the port area for the imminent arrival of 3RAR and elements of 2nd Cav Regt aboard the landing ships HMAS *Jervis Bay* and *Tobruk*, which were covered by RAAF FA-18 Hornets in case of Indonesian interference. The following morning this amphibious task group arrived, reinforcing the intervention force with the best part of 3RAR, and C Sqn from 2nd Cavalry in a mix of ASLAV-25s and ASLAV-PCs. A dozen Army Aviation S-70 Black Hawks flew in directly from Darwin, giving INTERFET an important heliborne capability. After the initial landings, the mission transitioned to Operation 'Stabilise'.

The Australian light armour was employed in a range of tasks, one armour officer recalled: 'The ASLAVs were initially reconfigured as an APC [Armoured Personnel Carrier] troop rather than as [in] a cav squadron. [That] means [that a troop] had 2 gun cars and ... 4 PCs [instead of the usual] 4 gun cars and 2 PCs. Later some surveillance cars turned up. During this period we were in support [of] brigade and div, who tasked us by troop to wherever things were hot: e.g., I did an airmobile with 2RAR; lifted 3RAR; did a classic cav recce task with 3RAR mortars and 162 Recce (and a shambles of UN and media vehicles); [and] did a cordon-and-search with 5/7RAR. [Others] went with SASR [and]

Diggers arrive by landing craft launched from HMAS *Tobruk* at Suai, East Timor, to establish WESTFOR – the code for INTERFET's southern security command; this was the largest amphibious mission conducted to date by Australian forces. By this date F88SA1 rifles were available, with an added Picatinny rail for the mounting of additional optics. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Sgt Bill Guthrie)

Men of 3RAR spread out through Dili, East Timor, on a cordon-and-search operation. In addition to his F88 the man at the right carries a slung 40mm M79; an effective under-barrel grenade-launcher mount for the F88 was not procured until the early 2000s. These soldiers wear the Australian designed and produced DPCU-pattern Combat Body Armour System (CBAS), which featured front and back trauma plates. Numbers of the PASGT ISAPO (in either olive drab, woodland, or even desert camouflage), and an Eagle Industries Maritime plate-carrier, all borrowed from the US, were also worn during this deployment. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia)

another did amphib... We later retooled into classic cav ops and spread out.

'[We] met up with 2RAR at the Bacau military airfield and slept guarded by the infantry. Just as I was falling asleep the OC's runner came over to me shouting "Where's your boss? The OC needs him now" – never a good sign. [I] slipped over to find out that the last thing they'd heard was "Indonesian armour is moving on your location" [before they] lost comms (this was pre-omnipresent SATCOM [satellite communications], and the HF [high-frequency radio] had dropped for the night). As it turns out, the Indo marines had a base just near there, and they were packing their armour to load it at a wharf nearby. We slipped into an empty Bacau the next day, to total World War II liberation scenes: flowers thrown on the LAVs, babies held out to be kissed, everyone came into the town square and sang, etc.'

Operation 'Warden' occurred concurrently and described the larger operation outside the capital. On 26 September, intelligence reported an attempt by militia/TNI forces to 'forcibly deport' East Timorese civilians from Com at the eastern end of Timor. A hasty operation was launched, with 3 Sqn, SASR taking the lead with a rifle company standing by as a quick-reaction force. The SASR surrounded the town in darkness and ordered the immediate surrender of Indonesian forces. Some two dozen armed men attempted to escape but were silently encircled by 3 Sqn using night-vision goggles. Simultaneously, the SASR switched on their weapon lights, illuminating the escapees and their vehicle, gaining complete surprise and capturing the enemy without firing a shot.

Contacts in 1999

In early October west of Suai, a RESPFOR patrol returning to base were ambushed and two SASR troopers were seriously wounded in the initial exchange. The RESPFOR element responded aggressively, while a reaction force raced to the scene of the contact. Two ASLAV-25s (one PC and one 'gun car') arrived and immediately engaged the militiamen, killing four, and a number were subsequently captured. An Australian officer mentioned to the author: 'I think the CC [crew commander] fired .50cal, the gun car for sure fired co-ax – which would have been the very first operational use of the ASLAV. The SASR troop leader wouldn't let the Cav troop leader open up the 25mm – Boo!'

The diggers of 2RAR also had a number of contacts, including an incident at Mota'ain, a coastal village near the border in the north-west. A pair of infantry platoons from C Co supported by M113A1s came under heavy fire (thankfully, mostly ineffective) from militiamen and TNI as they investigated reports of an incursion. The Australians returned fire; a number of militiamen were shot before the remaining enemy were outflanked (many had quickly retreated on being accurately engaged), and the APCs were deployed to cover them while a ceasefire was negotiated. It was discovered that the TNI and militia were using

a map dating from the 1930s, which showed Mota'ain as lying within Indonesian territory.

One of the largest contacts was experienced by SASR on 16 October 1999. A six-man reconnaissance patrol (including a British SBS operator on exchange) were contacted by between 50 and 60 militiamen; they killed a number of these during a series of running gun-battles until the patrol could break contact to their emergency helicopter landing site. Breen and McCauley noted: 'After over two hours of attack and counterattack, INTERFET helicopters flew in and picked up the patrol that was unscathed, covered by their comrades from an immediate reaction force.'

Days later, on 20 October, 3RAR were embroiled in a contact at the village of Beluluk Leten near the border with Indonesia. Two Kiowa reconnaissance helicopters from 162 Reconnaissance Sqn were fired upon as they overflew the village. Australian soldiers opened fire on the militiamen, but were forced to cease fire when civilians appeared intermixed with them. The gunmen showed no such qualms; the 3RAR company commander brought forward a sniper pair from his recon/sniper platoon, who sent the militia running.

Lessons

Despite the resounding success of Operation 'Stabilise', in many ways it was accomplished more by luck than by good management. Body armour had to be borrowed. The initial troops on the ground carried limited ammunition, with no immediate resupply available if the conflict had taken a sudden turn for the worse. There was also a lack of fresh rations, with many units eating field rations for the first eight weeks of the deployment. The lack of heavy-lift aircraft would lead directly to the later acquisition of a number of C-17 Globemasters. Tactical intelligence was poor; one participant told the author: 'Excellent strategic intelligence, and was briefed. Crap tactical intelligence. We had no insight into Indo army disposition and AOs [areas of operation] and size of militia forces, and given that the TNI had been handing out guns like candy, whether or not there were any anti-armour weapons in play.'

An ASLAV-25 PC of 2nd Cav Regt supporting 3RAR in the streets of Dili. The eight-wheeled Australian Light Armoured Vehicle, built in both 25mm-gun and seven-man personnel carrier variants (although the latter in reality typically carried only a two-man scout element), was based on the Canadian Bison. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia)

2RAR personnel deploy from an S-70 Black Hawk during the airmobile assault into Balibo, East Timor. Second from right, note an F88SA1 mounting a bulky ELCAN C79/M145 optic. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia)

Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart Yeaman, who served on INTERFET and later in Afghanistan, agreed, telling the author: 'I had been in Bosnia about three years earlier with the British, and by contrast Australia was a sad and badly prepared joke. The core failure was in our logistic support, but this was also compounded by lack of communications equipment, virtually no military police, and extremely lax control and discipline in HQ at all levels. Timor was indeed a wake-up call, and we were extremely lucky that we did not face a serious opposition – the Taliban, or Iraqi insurgents ... would have carved us up.'

Further stabilization operations would see Army elements, normally built around an infantry battalion battle group, deploy on Operations 'Tanager', 'Citadel', 'Spire' and 'Chiron'. For example, in 2001 4RAR would return to Timor after being ordered to halt their transition to a Commando role and rapidly restructure as a conventional infantry battalion. Four rifle companies along with a support company and battalion headquarters deployed in April after flare-ups with militia along the border. In all, some 5,500 Australian and 1,200 New Zealand service personnel were committed to East Timor under INTERFET and the subsequent United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).

Consequences

The INTERFET mission did bring the Army back into a positive light with the Australian public after many years of being largely forgotten. It also demonstrated to the international community, and friend and foe alike within the region, that the ADF was capable of a short-notice deployment without their American allies. INTERFET's success also influenced the Defence White Paper released in late 2000, which finally loosened the purse strings to modernize and restructure the Army to face the threats of a new century.

One veteran remarked to the author that the mission was the 'best training wheels the Army could have had... I think this was the beginning of the journey to three like-brigades of suitable combat weight. I'd also say it gave HQ AST real purpose, and helped it to shake out to run the multiple concurrent wars about to occur. Finally, there is something to be

said for government learning to deal with an active military, and I suspect that the government of the day drew the conclusion that it's better to overspend on insurance than have to rebuild from scratch – which is why governments of both stripes to this day seem committed to getting to 2 per cent [of GDP spent on the ADF].'

Operation 'Anode': Solomon Islands, 2003–05

Elsewhere in Australia's neighbouring region, in July 2003 the government deployed troops to the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific, where rioting and domestic unrest were verging on civil war. Operation 'Anode' was Australia's contribution to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI); three companies from 2RAR conducted an amphibious landing to secure the subsequent arrival of a multinational Participating Police Force (PPF), which included elements of the Australian Federal Police (AFP). Nathan Vinson, who deployed with 2RAR as sniper supervisor/recon platoon sergeant, told the author: '[The] main responsibility initially for my platoon was to deploy out to the various islands and assist in the collection of weapons from the local villages. Our second task was in covert operations, assisting the AFP in the observation and apprehension of known criminals.'

Regular battalions rotated through the Solomon Islands until 2005, when Army Reserve units took over responsibility for the RAMSI mission. Much had been learned since the INTERFET deployment, but problems still remained. Vinson is not the only veteran to recall the frustrations: 'One of the jokes going around the tent lines in the first few weeks was "How many majors does it take to change a light bulb?", as the deployment seemed very top-heavy compared to the support soldiers on the ground. Vital equipment and rations seemed to be provided first to those closest to the airport and not to the soldiers doing all the hard work. Double standards were rife between the AFP and armed forces. We would often see them heading out after duty into town and returning hours later intoxicated.' However, this deployment would provide 2RAR with 'valuable experience conducting real-time independent green-role operations'.

An ASLAV-25 'Type 1' or 'gun car' in Dili, with a scout 'dismount' providing rear security. Note field ration boxes stowed in the turret bustle rack, and 'CAUTION LEFT HAND DRIVE' warning; these Canadian-designed vehicles were never reconfigured for driving in Australia. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Cpl Darren Hilder)

Operation 'Astute': Timor-Leste, since 2006

Whilst operations in Iraq and Afghanistan continued (see below), Operation 'Astute' saw Australian forces once again deployed to East Timor, now known as Timor-Leste. According to Col John Hutcheson, the flare-up of rioting and attacks on police was caused by 'longstanding ethnic tensions, discontent with the police and military, and the failings of the Alkatiri government to deliver on expectations'. A dissident faction of the Timorese military led by Lt Cdr

Alfredo Reinado killed ten Timorese police officers, leading to a formal request for Australian assistance.

An infantry battle group supported by a company of commandos and Black Hawk helicopters deployed to quell the unrest and restore stability, along with a multinational force drawn from New Zealand, Malaysia and Portugal. A joint SASR and 4RAR element known as the Apprehension Task Group was also later deployed to capture Reinado, the rebel leader. SASR were involved in a firefight in March 2007 during an attempted capture mission in which five rebel soldiers were killed. Reinado eventually sat down to negotiations with the ruling party, but was killed in 2008 while leading an assassination attempt against the president. Under a United Nations Integration Mission (UNMIT), the ADF still has a small presence in Timor-Leste.

AFGHANISTAN, 2001–2014

Operation 'Slipper'

Coincidentally, Prime Minister Howard was in Washington in September 2001 when the horrific '9/11' attacks occurred, and he immediately offered full military support to the United States. The ADF contribution to the War in Afghanistan (which would become Australia's longest war) would be known as Operation 'Slipper'.

In December 2001, a Special Forces Task Group (SFTG) built around 1 Sqn, SASR deployed to Afghanistan as Task Force 64. The SASR were one of the only allied SOF to deploy with their own vehicles – six-wheeled Perentie Long Range Patrol Vehicles (LRPVs) – and soon found work conducting strategic reconnaissance for the USMC out of Camp Rhino.[2]

Later based out of Bagram and Kandahar, the SFTG deployed on numerous vehicle-mounted and dismounted patrols, and were instrumental in Operation 'Anaconda' in 2002. On that occasion an Australian SASR patrol in a mountaintop observation post, with their attached American combat controller, helped keep alive the US Army Rangers who were battling Uzbek insurgents on nearby Takur Ghar in the now famous 'battle of Roberts Ridge'.[3] The reputation that the SASR gained with their US allies prompted Gen James Mattis to declare: 'We Marines would happily storm hell itself with your troops on our right flank.'

All three SASR squadrons rotated through Afghanistan in 2002 before returning to Australia in anticipation of deployment in the impending invasion of Iraq (see below, 'Iraq, 2003–08'). The campaign was not without its cost, and in February 2002 the Australians lost their first soldier killed by enemy action since Vietnam. With the Taliban insurgency re-emerging as a threat to the nascent Afghan government, Australian SOF would later redeploy to Afghanistan in 2005 with a joint force of SASR and commandos (see page 23, 'Special Operations Task Group').

The SOF paved the way, and conducted shaping operations, for the eventual 2006 deployment of the first Australian conventional forces to Afghanistan in the form of Reconstruction Task Force 1 (RTF-1).

2 See Osprey Elite 163, *Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan*
3 See Osprey Raid 39, *Takur Ghar*

Special Operations Task Group vehicle park in Afghanistan, 2005. In the background are Land Rover 110-based Surveillance & Reconnaissance Vehicles (SRVs) commonly used by 4RAR (2 Commando) at this time; most of the others are the distinctive SASR six-wheel Perentie Long Range Reconnaissance Vehicles (LRPVs). A number of Kawasaki trail bikes and (foreground) Polaris All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) can also be seen. These were often employed for scouting and route reconnaissance, and the LRPV even featured a mounting bracket to carry a trail bike. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Sgt John Carroll)

This worked alongside a Dutch contingent in the southern province of Uruzgan based out of the provincial capital, Tarin Kowt. The Australian Army was still unable to deploy an organic force, and RTF-1 was made up of components drawn from several units including 6RAR and 5/7RAR; 2nd Cav Regt, providing ASLAVs; and 1st Combat Engineer Regiment. As well as leading the fight against the insurgents' weapon of choice, the 'Improvised Explosive Device' (IED), 1CER would conduct the important work of gaining civilian hearts and minds through reconstruction efforts.

Reconstruction

The RTF role was a rotational deployment for six months, and LtCol Stuart Yeaman commanded the fourth such rotation, RTF-4. He explained to the author the environment that Australian forces faced: 'The only industry with any future in Uruzgan was poppy [growing]... The environment was almost perfect for growing poppies, milking the sap and then moving the raw opium milk-cakes on the poor road network. Other than poppies there was nothing to do or work at other than fighting, herding and growing food crops.' Consequently, one of the key COIN/CIMIC projects established by RTF-4 was the 'Trade School', to give Afghans an opportunity to learn basic skills so they could find work.

'The point of the Trade School was to undermine the importance of the Taliban in the economic life of the province. If you work on the assumption that insurgents/guerrillas are driven into rebellion/insurgency because of the economic and social conditions, as part of your counter-insurgency you *must* address those... You could argue that where armies have been part of a wider social solution they have been successful over

Operators from the Special Operations Task Group in Uruzgan province, Afghanistan, 2005. They wear Series 3 DPDUs (which were widely disliked by the Special Forces), and the commando in the foreground carries an M4A5 carbine with ELCAN sight and AN/PEQ-2A laser illuminator. Identifiable vehicles include Bushmasters, an SRV and an ATV. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Capt Al Green)

A typical example of regular infantry section weapons and kit in *c.*2006, with the deployment of RTF-1 to Operation 'Slipper' in Afghanistan. The F88SA1s mount the Trijicon ACOG optic, and both the F89 and MAG58 (left) the ELCAN C79/ M145. The under-barrel grenade launchers are the RM Equipment M203 Product Improved, fitted with a KAC quadrant sight. These diggers appear to be wearing the second variant of the Hellweg CBAS in DPDU pattern, with individual chest rigs worn over the armour. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo LAC Rodney Welch)

insurgents [, and] where they have conducted pure fighting and ignored the underlying conditions, they have lost.

'The Trade School was often referred to as "the jewel in the crown"; sadly, it might have rather been too little to meet the lofty aspirations we had for it. The concept ... was to start a construction industry, which it practically achieved hand-in-hand with the [Australian] works-team construction projects. We had wider dreams… but without significant investment of time and effort that would not happen. [The] unfortunate reality was that once schools, hospitals and health clinics were built, the next industrial projects would probably have been drug factories and narco gang-houses.

'The hope was that [the Uruzgan trade school] might export their trained labour ... into other provinces such as Kandahar [, but that] would have taken a lot more effort than we could supply. What the trade school did do for the local population was that it provided money to families that might otherwise have had to grow poppy or work for the Taliban to generate cash. It did also generate goodwill. How much goodwill we will never know, but it was symbolic of an attempt to improve the lives of ordinary Afghans.'

RTF-4 deployed to Afghanistan early in 2008. This image illustrates the F89 LSW fitted with the rugged ELCAN optic; a section gunner typically carries 800 rounds in his pouches and pack. Note the new Enhanced Combat Helmet (ECH) attached to his assault pack, and his preference for the short-brimmed 'giggle hat'. Some examples of the ECH began to be seen alongside the PASGT during the 2008 deployments. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia)

The IED war

Australian soldiers faced an increasing threat from IEDs as the insurgents realized that they could not win a conventional fight against Western forces. The Engineers bore the brunt of the gruelling task of route clearance: 'When conducting vehicle convoys, whether a resupply run back to TK [Tarin Kowt] or a run to the other nearby patrol bases, the Engineer Vehicle is always in the lead. We continually scan the road for likely locations or signs of IEDs, and when it is assessed that there may be

a chance of an IED the convoy stops and we dismount and do our job: search through the suspected area, look for the signs, excavate possible problems [and] clear to the best of our ability in the time allowed.'

Searching for IEDs during dismounted patrols was equally nerve-wracking. 'Aqueduct crossings, rock walls, paths through crops and fields, or anywhere else an IED could be placed along our patrol path is an area we investigate. Being at the front of a patrol does not just expose us to the threat of IEDs, but also [to] the shoot threat. Though we can worry, we know our job and [its] importance in protecting the rest of our mates in the patrol.' (See also Plate F.)

2008: 'Mentoring & Liaison' with the ANA

In 2008, the RTF became the Mentoring & Reconstruction Task Force (MRTF). While continuing the work of its predecessors in COIN/CIMIC, this would also deploy an Operational Mentoring & Liaison Team (OMLT) to partner the Afghan security forces. MRTF-1 consisted of a Battle Group Headquarters; Combat Team Tusk, drawn from 7RAR with attached elements from 5RAR, 1RAR and 2nd Cav Regt; 1st Field Sqn of combat sappers; a logistical Combat Services Support Team; and the OMLT, working alongside the 2nd Kandak (battalion) of the Afghan National Army's 4th Brigade. The OMLT's headquarters element was co-located with the ANA Kandak headquarters, and the team was divided on the ground into three 17-man elements deployed in Bushmaster PMVs.

The leader of the first Australian OMLT was quoted as describing their mission thus: 'The focus of the OMLT was very similar to the Australian Army Training Team-Vietnam in that, while focusing on mentoring the 2nd Kandak, the OMLT also enhanced the tactical employment of that battalion against the Taliban.' In plain language, this euphemism meant that the OMLT were often involved in contacts while encouraging the ANA to manoeuvre against the enemy.

After being ambushed by an insurgent force armed with RPGs and multiple PKM medium machine guns in January 2008, one Australian mentor of OMLT callsign Oscar Two-Nine found that 'all but a small

Afghanistan, 2012: SOTG operators board an Afghan Special Mission Wing Mi-17 for an operation partnered with the Uruzgan Provincial Response Company. Crye MultiCam uniforms had by now replaced the disliked DPDU. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Special Operations Task Group)

number of the ANA soldiers were paralysed into inactivity by the shock and violence of the initial engagement, and instead of trying to return fire they hit the ground and stayed down. The biggest point of concern … at this point was my fellow Australian mentor, as there were only two of us with the patrol. I pushed forward onto the track and grabbed the collar of a PKM gunner … and attempted to push forward to where I assessed my Platoon Sergeant's position to be. The man carrying the PKM dropped to the ground after running a short distance, and refused to go any further forward. It was then that I heard the familiar sound of a 40mm grenade being fired. An immediate feeling of relief quickly followed, and I reached my Platoon Sergeant on the secure personal radio.'

Oscar Two-Nine faced encirclement and destruction by the insurgents; a reinforcing ANA platoon was itself ambushed, and only the timely arrival of Australian infantry and ASLAVs turned the tide. Such incidents were far from uncommon.

Some considered the refocus on mentoring the ANA, with the inevitable reduction in COIN and CIMIC projects, to be a strategic blunder. Colonel Yeaman told the author: 'I believe that we switched from reconstruction to mentoring far too early in the process. There is no point in conducting mentoring if you are not winning, or in fact unless you have almost won the war… I believe that the reconstruction/nation building/CIMIC concept was making ground in 2008. By the time we left in September 2008 [24 months into the programme] we had progressed from being shot at simply [when] driving out the front gate at Tarin Kowt, to being able to drive the 22km up to the Baluchi Valley without being molested.' By comparison, MRTF-1 was engaged by enemy small arms and RPGs some 31 times during their tour, while suffering 11 IED strikes and almost two dozen indirect-fire attacks from rockets and mortars.

Mentoring the ANA provided its own unique challenges. At a day-to-day level, there was frustration at their treatment of equipment; one OMLT situation report dryly requested that mentors again remind the ANA that at the moment 'the drivers are doing more

An 81mm F2 mortar team from Mortar Platoon, 7RAR deployed on Operation 'Slipper' in 2013. With a maximum range of almost 5,000m, the mortars provided a protective umbrella for patrols. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Capt Jesse Platz)

Snipers from 3RAR showing (right) the .50cal Accuracy International AW50F; this soldier also carries a slung F88 GLA. Partly visible is the foreground man's .338in Lapua Magnum Blaser Tactical 2, as originally purchased for SOF but later adopted by the infantry battalions; its straight-pull bolt action allows fast follow-on shots. Snipers also have available the 7.62x51mm bolt-action SR98, and the 7.62x51mm SR25 and HK417. (Courtesy Nathan Vinson)

damage to the vehicles than the insurgents'. Another report, from Australian sappers in 2011, voiced the central dilemma facing NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): 'a Western solution is not what is required for Afghans: they need to be able to solve problems their own way – the Afghan way.' Put simply, the family and tribal obligations of ANA soldiers often trumped any allegiance to an often remote central government, and the OMLT also struggled against the endemic corruption which was an everyday part of Afghan life. The MRTF (renamed the Mentoring Task Force or MTF in 2010) served in Uruzgan until 2012, when responsibility for the province was transferred to the ANA.

Special Operations Task Group

Renamed the SOTG, Australian SOF also maintained a rotational presence in Afghanistan until the end of 2013, hunting insurgent leaders and bomb-makers. Their operations saw an SASR contingent along with a company group from either 1 or 2CDO, supported by the specialists of the Special Operations Engineer Regt (formerly the Incident Response Regt), conducting missions for both the national command and ISAF.[4] An SASR commander commented in 2013 on their success in whittling down the opposing command structure: 'In 2002, when I was there, we were fighting some very senior Taliban leaders. We're now fighting some very junior Taliban leaders.'

Perhaps their most celebrated operation was the battle of Shah Wali Kot (or Tizak). Both the 2 Commando element and E Troop from 2 Sqn, SASR were recognized with an official battle honour, the Army's first since Vietnam, for their efforts in targeting Taliban high-value targets. The citation is worth quoting at length, as it provides a gripping insight into the types of operations the SOTG were conducting:

'During the early hours of 10 June 2010, immediately realising a tactical opportunity, Alpha Company Commando Group audaciously established

4 1st Cdo Regt's deployment to Afghanistan on SOTG rotation 8 in winter 2008–09 – a season when insurgent activity was generally less challenging than following the June harvest – was the first time an Australian reservist unit had been committed to 'war' since 1942. 1st Commando later deployed on five further Afghan tours, mainly in winter.

Unusual photo showing Australian gunners deployed to a British artillery unit – 7th (Para) Regt, Royal Horse Artillery, as part of British 16 Air Assault Bde for Operation 'Herrick XIII' in Helmand province, 2011. Note the British 105mm L118 light gun; for self-defence the gunners from 1st Field Regt RAA have been issued the 5.56x45mm L85A2 rifle and L110A2 Minimi LMG. See Plate H3 for uniform details. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Sgt Neil Ruskin)

an attack by fire position inside the insurgents' stronghold of Chenartu. Shortly after first light, the enemy surrounded the commandos and employed sophisticated tactics in an attempt to overrun the commando positions throughout the day. Holding their exposed positions doggedly under heavy and sustained attack, the commandos, determined to regain the initiative, launched several aggressive counterattacks against the assaulting enemy. Surprised by the ferocity of the commando response, combined with having lost significant numbers of fighters, the enemy withdrew to the village of Tizak to conduct deliberate planning for the destruction of the isolated commando company.

'Receiving intelligence that a high-level Taliban commander had now been drawn to the village of Tizak, a troop from the 2nd Special Air Service Squadron deployed by helicopter to conduct a kill-or-capture mission on the morning of 11 June 2010. Upon landing in Tizak, the troop was immediately engaged by a maelstrom of small arms fire and a stream of rocket-propelled grenades from insurgents in the village and the surrounding high ground, resulting in two friendlies being wounded in action and four helicopters sustaining battle damage.

'Despite being outnumbered four-to-one and suppressed under a hail of machine-gun fire, the troop inched forward until they were again checked and fixed by the interlocking fire of three machine guns. Drawing on the deepest reserves of collective courage, combined with notable acts of individual valour and gallantry, the initiative was regained, allowing a subsequent break-in of the enemy's defensive position. Exploiting a tenuous tactical foothold, the troop unflinchingly cleared the remaining depth positions in close-quarter combat throughout the remainder of the day while being relentlessly supported by US AH-64 Apache helicopters… At the conclusion of the battle, late on the evening of 14 June 2010, a significant number of high-level Taliban commanders, [and] a significant and disproportionate number of enemy fighters were killed, and the remaining enemy were routed and fled from the region.'

(continued on page 33)

1: Infantryman, 1975
2: Sniper; Singleton Infantry Centre, 1976
3: Infantryman, 1988

1: Gunner, RAA, infantry role; Cambodia, 1992
2: Infantryman, 1RAR task group; Somalia, 1992
3: Trooper, SASR; Rwanda, 1994

1: Infantryman, 3rd Bde; East Timor, 1999
2: Operator, 3 Sqn SASR, RESPFOR; East Timor, 1999
3: Operator, SFTG; Afghanistan, 2001–02

1: Commando, SFTG; Iraq, 2003
2: Military Policeman, SECDET; Iraq, 2005
3: Corporal, ASLAV commander; Iraq, 2006

D

1: Infantryman, OWBG; Iraq, 2007
2: Marksman, MTF-1; Afghanistan, 2010
3: ‘Guardian Angel’; Afghanistan, 2017

1: Sapper, 1CER, RTF-4; Afghanistan, 2007
2: Operator, 20th EOD Sqn; Afghanistan, 2013
3: Talon Unmanned Ground Vehicle

F

1: Sgt pilot, 16th (Army Aviation) Bde; Pakistan, 2006
2: Cpl aircrewman; Australia, 2016

1

2

3

3a

3b

3c

3d

1: Combat medic, AMTF; Pakistan, 2010
2: Infantryman, recon/sniper platoon; Australia, 2004
3: Gunner, 1st Field Regt RAA; Afghanistan, 2011

Cost and recognition

Australian combat operations in Afghanistan officially ended in 2014. It had been a costly war in terms of casualties; almost 250 soldiers were wounded, many seriously due to the insidious nature of the IED. Three Australians were killed in action in 2007, a further three in 2008 and four in the following year. 2010 saw ten killed, including two commandos in a Black Hawk crash and a pair of 6RAR soldiers killed by an IED. 2011 was similarly costly, with 11 deaths including two 'green on blue' incidents in which ANA soldiers turned on their Australian mentors; in the second such incident, three Australian soldiers were murdered.

Seven Australians would die in 2012, including three commandos in another helicopter crash, and three from the MTF murdered in yet another 'green on blue'. In both 2013 and 2014, only one Australian was killed on operations; Cpl Cameron Baird of 2 Commando was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his valour in the 2013 incident. In all, four Australians received the Victoria Cross for valour in Afghanistan: two from SASR (including Cpl Ben Roberts-Smith, for his conduct during the battle of Tizak described above), one from 2 Commando (Cpl Baird) and one from 6RAR.

IRAQ, 2003-2008

Contingencies: Operation 'Bastille'

Once the SFTG had withdrawn from Afghanistan in 2002, preparations had begun immediately to deploy both SASR and commandos to Iraq, although no such move was announced publicly. Two squadrons from SASR were even inoculated against anthrax and smallpox in preparation. At the time, the Army offered a range of options to the US, including an armoured battle group along with a substantial (in Australian terms) RAAF and RAN deployment under Operation 'Bastille'. According to the declassified history, 'The planners also realised that the Army could only provide a "one-shot force", because the organisation lacked the depth needed to provide a rotation element for any significant deployment, particularly in light of other existing commitments.'

Many of the options were dismissed due to a need for heavy-lift capability that Australia did not yet possess; incompatibility with US systems; or a distinct lack of anti-armour assets – initially Javelin ATGMs had to be borrowed from the US for SASR, and even stocks of ammunition for the issue Carl Gustav recoilless rifle were low. The idea of providing tanks was dismissed, due to the lack of night-vision systems

An F89 LSW gunner from 5/7RAR operating with the AMTG in as-Samawah, Iraq, 2004. He wears what appears to be Series 3 DPDU – see Plate F1a. Other photos often show uniforms and body-armour covers worn in contrasting combinations of DPDU and DPCU. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Cpl Neil Ruskin)

2005: posed beside Saddam Hussein's 'Crossed Swords of Triumph', ASLAV-PCs from 2nd/14th Light Horse Regt (Queensland Mounted Infantry), serving with SECDET in the International ('Green') Zone, Baghdad; that year the unit transitioned from Reserve to Regular status. Unlike those with the AMTG/OWBG, ASLAVs assigned to SECDET rarely mounted bar armour; it was considered dangerous to the Iraqi children who would crowd round vehicles in urban areas. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Cpl Robert Nyffenegger)

on the Australian Leopard, and decades of budget cuts had created a frightening shortage of 105mm main-gun ammunition; resupply from Germany was considered problematic due to Germany's opposition to the Second Gulf War. The Leopards would also have required additional appliqué armour, as their protection did not exceed that of Iraqi T-72 main battle tanks. (The Leopard had replaced the rugged old Centurion Mk 5.1 in the mid-1970s; while popular with crews, it never saw an operational deployment, and was outclassed in the 1990s. First deliveries of the M1A1 Abrams arrived in 2007.)

Along with an SFTG, the most likely contribution of combat elements was a cavalry reconnaissance battle group, but even this faced basic challenges: 'The pre-2004 ASLAV's armour was proof only against 7.62x39 ball round – the type of ammunition used by the AK-47 – and all light anti-armour weapons were capable of penetrating its skin. Critically, the vehicles also lacked spall liners.' Overall, Australia was simply not ready to fight a conventional war. Politics also played its inevitable part: an ASLAV battle group guarding the flanks of American conventional forces would be more likely to incur casualties which the government was keen to avoid. Again, the declassified history notes: 'Unlike the SFTG, the cavalrymen did not have the option to pick or choose their targets or bypass centres of resistance.'

Operation 'Falconer'

Eventually the Australian government publicly agreed to contribute to the US-led Coalition against Iraq, and deployed an SFTG comprising 1 Sqn, SASR and a company-minus from B Co, 4RAR in their new Commando role.[5] They would be supported by a handful of Army Aviation Chinooks, and a Nuclear Biological Chemical Defence troop. Operation 'Bastille' now became Operation 'Falconer'.

The SFTG mission was primarily to deny Iraq the use of WMD (weapons of mass destruction), while also conducting C-TBM (counter-theatre ballistic missile) and SR (special reconnaissance) operations, direct-action

5 See Osprey Elite 170, *Special Operations Forces in Iraq*

response operations by Alert Force (the commando element) and SSE (sensitive site exploitation). The SASR component entered Iraq just over six hours prior to commencement of hostilities on 18 March 2003, with A Troop flying in on American MH-47s and B and C Troops driving across the berm in LRPVs. On that first night, C Trp were involved in a contact with a small enemy force which they quickly defeated. This also saw the first operational use of the newly acquired Javelin, which destroyed an Iraqi 'technical' (armed pick-up truck).

1 Squadron, again designated as Task Force 64, operated in their own area of operation in a similar manner to a neighbouring British SAS squadron, and a squadron grouping from the American Delta Force. They conducted a range of direct-action missions, and intercepted high- value targets fleeing toward Syria. Most famously, they captured the massive al-Asad air base, including recovering a number of Iraqi Air Force jet fighters which had been buried for safety against Coalition bombing.

Operation 'Catalyst'

Operation 'Falconer' became Operation 'Catalyst' in May 2003. Initially, force protection for Australian diplomats and other government personnel, along with reconnaissance for the opening of an Australian embassy, was provided by the Baghdad Security Group, a small element of SASR soldiers and commandos. This was replaced by the rotational Security Detachment (SECDET), which would be based in an unfinished Baghdad building known as 'the Flats' before moving into one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces ('Camp Victory'), and finally relocating into the protected 'Green Zone' in 2005. Each SECDET element would serve in Iraq for six months. The officer commanding that first rotation commented: 'It was a very short-notice task, and had no scope for a mission rehearsal exercise.'

An ASLAV checkpoint in al-Muthanna, during the Overwatch Battle Group 4 rotation in 2008. Under magnification, the vehicles can be seen to have bar armour fitted as an additional counter to RPGs and recoilless rifles, and (left background) note the Kongsberg Protector remote weapons station. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia)

This first SECDET comprised a platoon drawn from B Co, 2RAR and an ASLAV troop from C Sqn, 2nd Cav Regt, along with a small number of Military Police to provide close personal protection, and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) specialists. They were later supported by numerous ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition & reconnaissance) assets that would conduct route reconnaissance and surveillance, including the Scan Eagle UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) and an RAAF Orion search aircraft. The structure remained largely unchanged over the course of 15 deployments.

SECDET conducted both force protection for movements of diplomatic personnel, and area security around the Carthage Hotel where Australian diplomats were first based. The Carthage, adjacent to the SECDET 'Flats', was defended by sniper and MAG58 positions on the roof, while infantry platoons conducted security patrols in the immediate vicinity. Escort patrols typically included one ASLAV-25 and a pair of ASLAV-PCs each carrying a four-man fire team of dismounts. Military Police crewed armoured Land Cruisers to ferry their charges.

The major threat to the SECDET was from unguided rockets, mortar attacks, and both static and vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs – car bombs). SECDET-2 'experienced 164 rocket attacks, 15 car bombings and hundreds of IED strikes'. In October 2004 an ASLAV was badly damaged and three crew wounded by a massive IED strike. In January 2005, a VBIED detonated outside 'the Flats' wounded two Australians. Later that month another VBIED attack against an escort patrol saw an ASLAV extensively damaged and another four Australians wounded. During an escort mission in 2006 to an Iraqi Army facility in al-Rumaythah, the SECDET element was effectively surrounded by insurgents while the meeting was taking place in the barracks. Countering enemy RPG and small-arms fire, SECDET snipers engaged numerous gunmen to allow the exfiltration of the Australian contingent in their Bushmasters and ASLAVs. By their final redeployment to Australia, 15 members of SECDET rotations had been wounded in action, and one killed in a non-combat related incident.

In 2005, the Australian government deployed the al-Muthanna Task Group (AMTG) in addition to the SECDET. The AMTG was an infantry

The Boxer CRV (left) is slated to replace the venerable ASLAV series in Cavalry units. Dwarfing its predecessor, it also has vastly improved protection, capacity and endurance. The Australian Army's Boxer is armed with a 30mm cannon and coaxial 7.62x51mm MG; under the LAND 400 Phase 2 acquisitions, it is also planned to mount the Israeli Spike LR2 ATGM. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia)

The Hawkei PMV-Light (aka 'Baby Bushmaster'), adopted to replace a number of Land Rover-based light vehicles. Two have been dispatched to Iraq for field trials with Task Group Taji. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Cpl Nunu Campos)

and cavalry battalion-level force, which took over responsibility from a previous Dutch contingent for the protection of the engineers of the Japanese Iraq Reconstruction Group deployed to southern Iraq. They were strictly directed not to get 'involved in offensive or policing actions'. Along with force protection, the AMTG would conduct training for the fledgling Iraqi security forces. In 2006 the AMTG transitioned into the Overwatch Battle Group West (OWBG), which conducted operations until their return to Australia in 2008.

The AMTG and OWBG suffered numerous RPG ambushes, IED and VBIED contacts. An incident in April 2007 involved an Iranian-produced explosively formed projectile (EFP) IED, which all but destroyed one ASLAV resulting in three Australian wounded, and two ASLAVs damaged by additional IEDs. When the Australians returned to recover the immobilized vehicles they were again attacked by a large insurgent force. Later that year a Bushmaster was knocked out by a similar EFP, wounding another soldier.

Other Australian Army elements were also embedded with Coalition forces and headquarters, or were stationed at Balad Air Base with the Australian Defence Force Medical Detachment. Australian trainers were deployed as the 45-man (later increased to 70) Australian Army Training Team Iraq (AATTI), mentoring the reconstituted Iraqi Army. Based at al-Kasik Military Base west of Mosul, the AATTI had a number of close calls themselves, including an attack by multiple VBIEDs and indirect-fire rocket attacks. The AATTI returned to Australia along with the OWBG in 2008.

OPERATIONS SINCE 2014

During the first decade of the new century the structure of the Army remained in flux. The 4th Bn, RAR finally completed their transition into 2 Commando Regt, and stood up an additional counter-terrorist unit (Tactical Assault Group-East) based on the Australian east coast (mirroring the SASR's west-coast element, TAG-West). In 2006, 5/7RAR were de-linked into 5RAR and 7RAR to increase capability, although

many battalions remained understrength. In 2008, 8/9RAR also returned to the order of battle as a regular motorized infantry battalion, going on to serve in Timor-Leste and Afghanistan.

Operation 'Highroad', Afghanistan

From mid-2014, Operation 'Slipper' in Afghanistan transitioned to Operation 'Highroad'. With the MTF and SOTG no longer in theatre, this was a reduced commitment that focused purely on the 'long-term capabilities of the Afghan security forces as part of our current train, advise and assist mission'. The training personnel were protected by a rotational Force Protection Element based on an infantry company and deployed in the 'Guardian Angel' role, protecting against both 'green on blue' insider attacks and threats from the Taliban and associated insurgent groups. Although originally slated to end in 2018, the Australian Afghan commitment, like those of many partner nations, looks set to continue indefinitely.

Operation 'Okra', Iraq

In Iraq, the Australian Army deployed to support the multinational efforts against Islamic State under Operation 'Okra'. Along with an RAAF component involved in bombing targets in Iraq and Syria, two Army contingents, a Special Operations Task Group and Task Group Taji, have been operating within Iraq since 2014 and 2015 respectively. The SOTG was built around a company-strength force from 2 Cdo Regt and initially provided training to Iraqi SOF. However, SOTG Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) were later responsible for calling in Coalition airstrikes in support of Iraqi forces attempting to retake cities overrun by Islamic State. The author has seen images of at least one Bushmaster, presumably operated by 2CDO, forward-deployed in Mosul.

Task Group Taji is a six-month rotational 'Building Partner Capacity' deployment consisting of both Australian and New Zealand Army personnel. The name comes from the Taji Military Complex near Baghdad where the force is predominantly based. Each deployment package consists of an infantry company plus specialists from all corps of the Australian Army.

* * *

While Iraq and Afghanistan remain in the news, with both commitments on-going at the time of writing, the Australian Army has also continued to support overseas peacekeeping missions. One of the latest is Operation 'Aslan' as part of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. Similar missions remain likely if tensions again flare up in Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea or the Solomon Islands; for the foreseeable future, Australia will remain the policeman in its local region.

CURRENT & FUTURE OPERATIONAL STRUCTURES

Formations

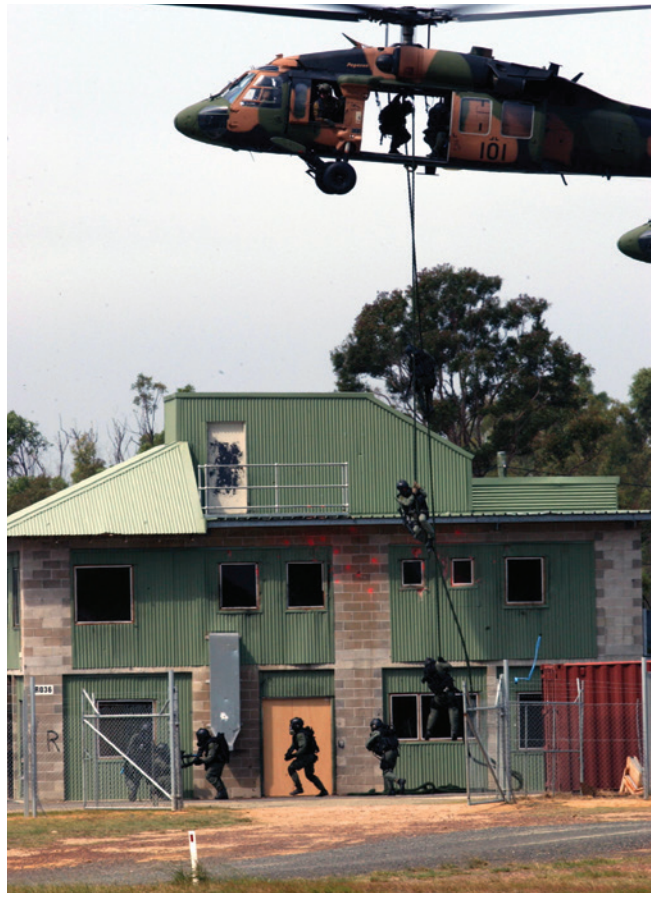
The Australian Army today defines its current and near-future role as to 'Deter and defeat armed attacks on Australia. Contribute to stability and security in the South Pacific and Timor-Leste. Contribute to military contingencies in the Indo-Pacific region, with priority given to Southeast

Asia. Contribute to military contingencies in support of global security.' To accomplish this ambitious goal, Plan 'Beersheba' (named after the famous Australian victory in Palestine in 1918) was announced in 2011.

The Army now has two divisions. 1st Division HQ, responsible for training, doctrine and contingency planning, has no units permanently assigned to it except for the new pathfinder/reconnaissance asset 2RAR Amphibious Group. 2nd Division has six brigades, wholly manned by reservists.

The six regular formations include three combat brigades – 1st Bde based in Darwin, 3rd Bde in Townsville, and 7th Bde in Brisbane – supported by 6th Combat Support Bde (Intelligence & Surveillance), 16th Bde (Aviation) and 17th Combat Service Support Bde (Logistics). All answer directly to Forces Command, as do the reservists of 2nd Division. The SASR and Commandos now operate directly under SOCOMD (Special Operations Command) as an equal to Forces Command – thus illustrating the importance of SOF within the Army.

Operational deployments are commanded and controlled by 1st Div, which selects the combat brigade that is in the 'ready' phase of the 36-month cycle (see below), and attaches whatever specialist elements are needed from the supporting brigades. Advance-force operations for overseas deployments are the task of 2RAR and elements from SOCOMD. Helicopter support is provided by 16th Bde, which consists of three Aviation Regts flying a mix of Tiger armed reconnaissance, Black Hawk and Taipan medium-lift, and Chinook heavy-lift helicopters.



Commandos of 4RAR/2CDO, serving on Tactical Assault Group-East rotation in 2005, practice fast-roping down from a Black Hawk of 6th Aviation Regt to break into a 'terrorist stronghold'. Under magnification they can be seen to wear green Nomex flight suits and Rabintex RBH helmets, and to carry a variety of 9x19mm H&K MP5 sub-machine guns. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Cpl Sean Burton)

As already noted, prior to the 'Beersheba' restructuring each combat brigade was organized around a particular capability (1st Bde was Mechanized; 3rd Bde, Light; 7th Bde, Motorized). This caused problems during sustained rotational deployments, as in East Timor and Afghanistan. Deployed units might have to operate as light infantry or in Bushmaster PMVs, so often needed retraining in their core roles when they returned to Australia. Under 'Beersheba', each has become a multi-role manoeuvre brigade, and between them they can conduct sustainable rotating deployments over a 36-month cycle. At any time one brigade is either 'ready' or actually deployed; one is 'readying', i.e. preparing to relieve it; and one is on 'reset', resting and retraining after returning from operations.

Elements of SOCOMD are deployable at short notice. The Command comprises the SASR, two light infantry battalions – 1st and 2nd Cdo Regts – and the Special Operations Engineer Regiment. The 1st Cdo Regt, raised from 1955 onwards, is manned by reservists. The 2nd Cdo Regt, formed from 4RAR beginning in 1997, is a regular

The upgraded M113AS4 with one-man turret, improved armour, increased capacity and power-pack and extra road wheel, developed under Project LAND 106. This APC will soldier on in mechanized infantry battalions until replaced with a new tracked IFV under the LAND 400 Phase 3 acquisitions. The Australian tan, light olive and black vehicle camouflage scheme has been in use throughout the period covered by this book. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia)

unit, whose role is akin to that of the US Army Rangers or the British Special Forces Support Group. They conduct raids, ambushes, reconnaissance and counter-terrorism, and when working closely with the SASR they often provide the 'muscle' for shaping operations, cordons and diversions for the latter's reconnaissance, infiltration and capture-or-kill missions.

Elements of 2 Cdo also man one of two full-time Army counter-terrorist units, Tactical Assault Group-East; TAG-East responds to both national incidents beyond the capabilities of state police and international incidents involving Australian citizens. The second unit, TAG-West, with a similar range of tasks, is maintained by the SASR.

Units and equipment

In 2017 the Chief of Defence Force, LtGen Angus Campbell, explained that 'combat brigades will evolve to include one infantry battalion with infantry fighting vehicles and one infantry battalion with protected mobility vehicles. While the infantry will still hold their dismounted skills, they will now have greater firepower and targeting capability down to section level. An additional cavalry squadron per armoured cavalry regiment will increase the reconnaissance and surveillance capability within the combat brigades. The new IFVs, combat reconnaissance vehicles and armoured engineer capability will provide greater protection for our people from highly lethal weapon systems, and hold the same mobility as our most capable close combat platform, the M1A1 Abrams tank.'

At unit level, infantry battalions are based on the British model, with three rifle companies and one support company including signals, assault

pioneer and recon/sniper platoons, integral 81mm mortars, and the defence fire-support weapons (DFSW) platoon equipped with machine guns, automatic grenade launchers, Javelin ATGMs and Carl Gustav recoilless rifles. A battalion headquarters staff and an administration company support the combat elements.

The battalion undergoing the largest change following 'Beersheba' has been 2RAR. Its strength has now been reduced to four infantry platoons (primarily due to space restrictions on the Australian Landing Craft Heavy, LCH), plus a support company which includes small boats and the traditional signals and recon/sniper platoons. Their role, as defined by the current commanding officer in 2017, is to act as 'the eyes and ears of Australia's amphibious force, specializing in the use of small boats and the conduct of reconnaissance, surveillance and sniping in a littoral [coastal] environment. They will be aiming to provide the landing force with a detailed understanding of the environment they are about to step into.' Additionally, 2RAR is now the only Australian battalion with its own integral artillery, in the form of 108th Battery RAA, to support their landing operations. All other artillery is grouped at brigade level.

Meanwhile, 3RAR has transitioned from being the Army's sole parachute-qualified airborne battalion, first to a light infantry role, and now to a mechanized one with M113AS4s. These are to be replaced in future with the as-yet-unannounced LAND 400 Phase3 Infantry Fighting Vehicle (a modern tracked IFV with a 25mm to 30mm cannon and probable ATGM capability).

Armoured and cavalry units operate in squadrons, following the US Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) model, with two squadrons of ASLAVs and one squadron of M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks within each regiment. Each tank troop, of which there are typically four within a squadron, is equipped with four M1A1 AIM. Cavalry troops are currently equipped with four ASLAV-25 'gun cars' (or 'Type 1s') and two ASLAV-PCs (or 'Type 2s'), along with a dismounted scout section. A cavalry troop further breaks down into two sections each with two

The new EF88 rifle in action in Iraq, 2017, with Task Group Taji. Extensively redesigned after lessons learned during the F88's 30 years in service, the EF88 is lighter and far more ergonomic than its predecessor. Note the ELCAN Specter, which has been selected as the standard combat optic. This new Team Wendy/ Wilcox EXFIL ballistic helmet will be designated the Tiered Combat Helmet in Australian service. The 'under-armour shirt' of the latest issue Australian MultiCam Uniform (AMCU) shows its uncamouflaged torso in a moisture-wicking fabric. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo ABIS Chris Beerens)

ASLAV-25s, one ASLAV-PC and a four-man scout team of dismounts. The mechanized units such as 3RAR, equipped with the M113AS4, have four APC troops per squadron, with a troop headquarters plus three M113AS4s in each troop.

The Australian Army has modified section and platoon structures a number of times since Vietnam. In the 1970s and into the '80s a 12-man section was standard, broken down into four elements: a scout group, the gun group (based around the M60), the command group and the rifle group. During the 1990s and into the early 2000s a nine-man section was used. This was reduced to eight under 'Infantry 2012', which also brought forward a trials concept – the Manoeuvre Support Section (MSS) at platoon level. The MSS was envisioned as having three four-man fire teams equipped with a range of support weapons (MAG58, SR25 sniper rifle, Carl Gustav), to act as overwatch or fire-support groups for the rifle sections. In fact the concept was never fully adopted, with the 'extra' MSS members often being absorbed into typically understrength rifle sections to make up the numbers. This concept may be revisited, with a support section of heavy weapons (possibly drawn from or replacing the support company's DFSW platoon) held at rifle-company level, but this is as yet unconfirmed.

The infantry are rumoured to be restructuring from the current eight-man sections into three nine-man sections per platoon; one of the nine will be a driver for the Bushmaster PMV in motorized battalions. In mechanized battalions, infantry sections may be reduced to six dismounts with the additional three soldiers crewing the LAND 400 Phase 3 IFV. Again, these details have yet to be confirmed (and, having followed many such proposed changes over the years, the author cautions interested readers to await formal announcement).

* * *

'Beersheba' is work in progress, continuing to modernize the Army to meet future threats and to incorporate the lessons learned from almost two decades of constant operational deployments. In broad terms, the focus will be on digitization of all battlefield management systems; offensive and defensive cyber capabilities; the integration of armed and unarmed unmanned aerial and ground vehicles at all levels; continual upgrades to the tank fleet (probably the fully digital M1A2 SEP V2); new indirect-fire platforms, including mobile 120mm mortars and new longer-range artillery systems with guided precision rounds; and a new generation of aviation assets to 'comprise a mix of manned and unmanned tilt-rotor, rotary and fixed-wing systems.'

The Australian Army is an important case-study in transformation. After a post-Vietnam low which lasted well into the 1990s, the Army experienced its 'road to Damascus' moment with the 1999 East Timor deployment. This forced both generals and politicians to reconsider the Army's role and capabilities, many of which were sorely lacking. For many years the Army still scrabbled to support anything but a small-scale enduring overseas deployment, but progress was being made. The lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan, and a thorough review of the threats from near-peer adversaries in the new era of 'hybrid warfare', have seen real and committed organizational change, which is reshaping and re-equipping the Army to tackle the new challenges.

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PLATE COMMENTARIES

A1: Infantryman, 1975

Looking for all the world like his Vietnam War predecessors, this infantryman wears the standard 'jungle greens', black leather GP boots, 'giggle hat' and American M1967 Modernized Load Carrying Equipment, and carries the 7.62x51mm semi-automatic L1A1 self-loading rifle. This appearance would remain unchanged for at least another decade. The Infantry Corps' Regimental Sergeant Major, WO1 Adrian Hodges, recently recollected that 'I joined the Australian Army in 1987, [was] issued a "green" uniform, a single-shot weapon (7.62mm SLR), black GP boots, and [ate] the same rations as my father did in Vietnam in 1968. The Australian Army hadn't fundamentally evolved in almost two decades, due to a lack of tangible investment.'

A2: Sniper; Singleton Infantry Centre, 1976

A graduate of the first sniper school held since 1944, wearing a personally-made 'ghillie' or 'yowie' suit over his fatigues. The suit was based on hessian (burlap) fabric and netting, which was interwoven with camo-painted strips and bunches of teased-out hessian 'string'. His weapon is the venerable but reliable .303in SMLE No.1 Mk III HT; Lee-Enfields were not replaced with the 7.62x51mm Parker Hale M82 until 1979. Sniping in the Australian Army lost focus during the post-Vietnam era, but slowly regained prominence in the 1980s and into INTERFET. Snipers today have a firm place within battalion recon/sniper platoons (with three teams of two), and an annual competition is hosted by SASR. Until recently, two snipers from 2CDO held the world record for the longest-range successful engagement from an incident in Kajaki, Helmand Province in April 2012. Using the .50 Barrett M82A1, both men engaged and killed an insurgent commander at an astonishing 2,815m (1.76 miles).

An F89 light support weapon gunner from 2/4RAR in Rwanda, 1994–95, showing the elderly M69 'flak jacket'. Unusually, he is pictured without headgear; one veteran wrote 'Initially we wore the blue UN caps or berets, but half way through the trip we were directed to wear slouch hats' – compare with Plate B2. (Courtesy Nathan Vinson)

A3: Infantryman, 1988

This man marks the radical change that finally occurred following the hiatus described by WO1 Hodges. The DPCU or Disruptive Pattern Camouflage Uniform ('AUSCAM') had taken almost a decade to develop and issue. Its colours and pattern were developed for the Australian bush; this would later lead to issues when troops deployed to the very different terrain of Afghanistan. The similarly camouflaged Australian M1988 Individual Combat Load Carrying Equipment would also take some time to become general issue. He carries the then newly issued 5.56x45mm F88 or 'AusSteyr' rifle with integral 1.5x optic.

A3a: DPCU camouflage pattern

This consisted of a pale drab base overprinted with sharp-edged blotches in two shades of green and two of brown.

B1: Gunner, Royal Australian Artillery in infantry role; Cambodia, 1992

This illustration is based on Gnr Trent Prince, RAA, who had the misfortune to be taken hostage by the Khmer Rouge; he was later released safely after negotiations. He wears DPCU with a blue UN cap, its badge repeated on his right sleeve above a sizeable full-colour Australian flag patch. At this date the Australian M1988 webbing was in the process of replacing a mixture of US M1956, M1967 and ALICE equipment; even items of the British P44 'jungle' set were still in circulation. Photos show Gnr Prince carrying a radio on a packboard.

B2: Infantryman, 1st Bn Royal Australian Regiment task group; Somalia, 1992

This soldier wears a version of the diggers' distinctive slouch hat made in the same pattern as his DPCUs, and an elderly US M69 'flak jacket'; note flag patch on left-arm brassard. As well as his rifle (note the flag decal on the optic), he carries a slung 40mm M79 grenade launcher, and at his feet we illustrate the 5.56x45mm F89 light support weapon, which replaced the 7.62x51mm M60 general purpose machine gun as the 'section gun' in the late 1980s. Breen and McCauley (see Biblio) say of the use of body armour: 'Somali attitudes to flak jackets were an unexpected bonus. Flak jackets worn by members of the 1 RAR Group only protected the torso from fragments, flying debris and possibly spent bullets fired from some distance. Somalis believed that the jackets would stop bullets fired at closer ranges. Consequently Australians not only proved to be difficult targets because of their individual skills, weaponry and teamwork, but also because their torsos were perceived by Somalis to be bulletproof.'

B3: Trooper, Special Air Service Regiment; Rwanda, 1994

This illustration is based on Tpr Jon Church, an SASR medic who conducted a number of courageous rescues of civilians. At one point, a rifle was pointed at his head and he was told he would be shot if he attempted to rescue another infant; nonetheless, Church managed to secrete a baby in his medical bag and smuggle it to safety. He wears latex medical gloves, a UN-blue PASGT helmet, a PASGT Interim Small Arms Protective

Overvest (ISAPO), DPCU with UN and Australian flag patches on right and left shoulders respectively, and a pair of the first trial batch of brown GP boots; note that even on this rescue mission he too carries both his rifle and a slung M79 'wombat gun'. Tragically, Church would be killed in 1996 while serving with SASR on a counter-terrorism exercise at High Range, Townsville, when two Black Hawk helicopters collided in mid-air.

C1: Infantryman, 3rd Brigade; East Timor, 1999
He wears the DPCU (still with black boots), a PASGT helmet with DPCU cover, and the then newly issued Hellweg-manufactured body armour with DPCU cover; note the large plate pocket on the chest. The black item is a commercially-acquired Camelbak water bladder with drinking tube. His F88 is fitted with a Canadian ELCAN Wildcat optic.
C1a: Army sleeve insignia
In black on a brown backing, this badge worn high on the left shoulder reproduces the classic 'rising sun' hat and collar badge (in fact, a fan of bayonets) worn by Australian 'diggers' since World War I.
C2: Operator, 3 Squadron, SASR, RESPFOR; Dili, East Timor, 1999
This member of the Australian–New Zealand–British SF element has drawn his 9x19mm Heckler & Koch USP at a moment of tension. Over his standard DPCUs he wears an aftermarket Eagle plate-carrier; note the large F89 pouch and the Serpa holster attached to its MOLLE strips. He carries hitched beside his leg a suppressed 5.56x45mm M4A5, the common individual weapon of Australian SF.
C3: Operator, SFTG/Task Force 64; Afghanistan, 2001–02
Trying to stave off the winter cold, this operator probably from 1 Sqn, SASR wears a woollen 'cap, comforter', an Arab *shemagh* headscarf and gloves. His DPDU jacket is in Series 1 desert camouflage; it is worn with American-issue Gore-Tex ECWCS three-colour DCU-pattern trousers. The pouches on his load-bearing vest include both issue and aftermarket items. His weapon is the 5.56x45mm M4A5 fitted with an M203 grenade launcher, ELCAN optic and Knight's QD suppressor, and personally camouflage-painted.
C3a: DPDU Series 1 camouflage pattern
This resembled the DPCU, but with light grey and chocolate-brown spots on a sand-yellow base.

D1: Commando, SFTG; Iraq, 2003
As part of the 4RAR Commando company group sent to Iraq, he wears a *shemagh* and goggles against the wind and dust, the short-lived Series 2 DPDU uniform (although some commandos still wore the Series 1 in Iraq), an issued commercial Snugpak jacket and American Danner desert boots. The Bronze Wing load-carrying vest is hand-painted in camouflage colours. His weapon is the 5.56x45mm Minimi Para light support weapon, its ammo feed box covered with DPCU fabric. (Another weapon used by both SASR and commandos was the suppressed 7.62x51mm KAC SR25 sniper rifle.)
D1a: DPDU Series 2 camouflage pattern
The base colour was creamy white, overlayed with light lime-green, two shades of grey, and chocolate-brown.
D2: Military Policeman, SECDET; Iraq, 2005
This MP serves with the protection team guarding Australian diplomats in Baghdad. The cover of his Gentex helmet and his uniform are in Series 2 DPDU, and his Hellweg-produced MOLLE CBAS body armour has a matching cover. This armour came with optional neck, upper arm, forearm and belly/groin protectors, but these were typically worn only on mounted or static operations due to their weight and unwieldiness; our MP has attached the upper-arm pieces only. The right-hand one displays a black brassard bearing a coloured national flag patch above the 'MP' in red. His personal weapon would be the F88SA1C carbine version of the standard rifle; this attracted a widely held but possibly mythical reputation in the ADF as being more accurate than the full-length variant due to a reduction in oscillations thanks to the barrel being some 3.9ins shorter. Here, however, he is examining a 7.62x51mm SR98 bolt-action sniper rifle, fitted with a Schmidt & Bender variable optic and a suppressor, as used by the SECDET sniper teams which provided overwatch.
D3: Corporal, ASLAV commander; Iraq, 2006
This CC ('crew commander') wears the Gentex-made Ballistic Shell Combat Vehicle Crewman helmet; jacket and trousers (note special version with zipped thigh-pockets) in Series 2 DPDU; CBAS with Series 1 DPDU cover, and green-grey Nomex gloves. His 'rising sun' badge (now on desert-camo backing) and flag patch are attached temporarily to the upper left sleeve. Note the repeated flag patch on his armour; corporal's chevrons would be displayed in black on a vertical central strip. He carries his 9x19mm Browning Mk III Hi-Power

An SOTG operator in Afghanistan, 2013, wearing the Crye Precision MultiCam uniform – see Plate E3 – with AirFlex Combat Knee Pads. His body protection appears to be the Tiered Body Armour System (TBAS) Tier 2, which is current issue to close combatants, and his helmet is the Crye Precision Airframe. His rifle is the 7.62x51mm HK417 mounting the ELCAN Specter variable optic. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo POIS Phil Cullinan)

sidearm held in place by the armour's MOLLE strips. The first combat use of the ASLAV-25's Bushmaster cannon occurred in Iraq during a contact on 13 April 2004, which saw an insurgent mortar position engaged and destroyed.

D3a: National left-sleeve patch

This was now made on a backing of DPDU cloth, with blue-lettered 'AUSTRALIA' below the full-colour flag.

E1: Infantryman, OWBG; Iraq, 2007

This infantryman wears a helmet cover and uniform in the final Series 3 version of the DPDU pattern, which is rumoured to have been designed specifically for the Iraqi environment (see also Plate F1a). His armour is the short-lived DPDU MCBAS (Modular Combat Body Armour System), which again came with optional neck, arm and groin protection, and was again considered too bulky and hot. His weapon is the 5.56x45mm F88SA1 GLA mounting the 40mm M203 launcher, and here with an ELCAN optic. In Afghanistan in 2008 rifles began to be fitted with interim-purchase ACOG optics.

At least one Australian soldier in Afghanistan was saved by his body armour: Pte Philip Hodgskiss was struck in his rear plate by two 7.62x39mm rounds during a contact. Neither round penetrated, and Hodgskiss was able to continue the fight, later digging one of the spent AK rounds from his CBA. He commented: 'After the intensity of the firing had slowed down, our first-aider for the section came over to check me out and give me a once-over. He removed my webbing and lifted my body armour and cut my shirt open to see if I was bleeding. He said, "Yeah, you've definitely been shot, but it doesn't look like anything has gone through" … I didn't feel any pain to begin with.'

E2: Marksman, MTF-1; Afghanistan, 2010

He wears an Enhanced Combat Helmet with DPCU cover, and the OCU or Operational Camouflage Uniform in the Crye MultiCam pattern; invisible here, this is the combat shirt with moisture-wicking uncamouflaged torso and armpits. His rifle is the 7.62x51mm HK417 with Trijicon 6x ACOG optic, and Ruggedized Miniature Reflex sight for close-range shooting. Among the components of his backpack are a water bladder with drinking tube, and, identified by its antenna, a man-pack electronic counter-measures unit to jam IEDs.

E3: 'Guardian Angel'; Afghanistan, 2017

This infantryman guarding his comrades from ANA 'green on blue' attacks wears the Team Wendy EXFIL ballistic helmet, and the current Australian Army field uniform – the AMCU or Australian MultiCam Camouflage Uniform, which incorporates the colours of the original DPCU pattern but distributed in a design copying the Crye MultiCam (see Plate G2a). This figure also wears the 'under-armour' shirt, with the torso and inner upper arms in plain material that offers better ventilation; almost invisible on his left-sleeve pocket flap is a subdued IR-reflective flag patch. His kit follows the recent 'Fight Light' initiative, with no side plates in his Tier 2 TBAS. At 6.5kg with plates, this is significantly lighter than previous body armour systems; the basic rifleman's load is five extra magazines, one fragmentation and one smoke grenade. He carries a personally-camouflaged

Soldiers from Support Co, 3RAR in Afghanistan, 2010, uncovering some of the local illicit produce. They wear the Australian license-produced MultiCam Operational Combat Uniform (OCU), with Tier 2 TBAS plate-carriers. Before the MultiCam became available many soldiers believed that the basic DPCU was superior to the DPDU for operations in the fertile 'green zones' along the irrigation canals. Both men carry the F88SA2 variant rifle, mounting both the ACOG and a Trijicon RMR close-quarter battle sight. (Courtesy Nathan Vinson)

example of the new EF88 rifle in the GLA format with a Steyr Mannlicher 40mm launcher, and here with an ACOG optic.

F1: Sapper, 1st Combat Engineer Regiment, RTF-4; Afghanistan, 2007
The critical work of finding IEDs and clearing safe lanes was conducted by the attached 'sappers' from 1CER, Royal Australian Engineer Corps. After an Explosive Detection Dog (EDD) sniffed out the first signs and alerted its handler, the engineer would then locate the suspicious object using the issue Minelab F3 detector, before using his mine probe (here looped to his wrist) to investigate the potential IED. Note the base-green Enhanced Combat Helmet, and the use of DPCU pattern uniform; his body-armour cover is in contrasting DPDU Series 3 pattern.
F1a: DPDU Series 3 camouflage pattern
This reverted to the original 'AUSCAM' five-colour format; the base colour was a slightly yellower shade than in Series 1, and the lime-green of Series 2 was replaced with a third grey shade.
F2: EOD operator, 20th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron; Afghanistan, 2013
The Canadian-made Med-Eng EOD 9 bomb suit weighs over 30kg, but has its own air-cooling system, and provides the highest level of ballistic and blast protection.
F3: Talon Unmanned Ground Vehicle
This remotely controlled 'bomb robot' is capable of examining IEDs and often of making them safe, thus hopefully eliminating the need for the EOD operator to don the bomb suit.

G1: Sergeant pilot, 16th (Army Aviation) Brigade; Pakistan, 2006
This S70 Black Hawk pilot is deployed on the humanitarian Operation 'Pakistan Assist' – thus his lack of a personal weapon, which for a combat operation would be a 9x19mm Browning in a thigh or chest holster. He wears the pale-blue beret and black-backed silver badge of his corps, and a Nomex flight shirt and trousers in DPCU pattern; note the extra pockets. The cover of his CCA Aircrew Body Armour is in the same pattern; this, and his Secumar life vest, cover the slanting breast pockets and the rank patch worn on his left breast, but the Army 'rising sun' badge on an oval DPCU patch is visible on his left shoulder.
G1a: CCA Aircrew Body Armour
G1b: Sergeant's rank patch
G2: Corporal aircrewman, Army Aviation; Australia, 2016
This NCO crews an MRH90 (Multi Role Helicopter), known as the Taipan, which is scheduled to replace the Army's Black Hawk fleet. However, the full procurement programme has been delayed, and 6th Aviation Regt, who support SOF units, will continue to operate Black Hawks until at least 2021. The most striking item of his equipment is the Gentex HGU-56/P Aircrew Integrated Helmet System, with its ballistic maxillofacial shield – reminiscent of a certain warlord in a galaxy far, far away… Over his AMCU flight uniform he wears an Air Warrior survival vest in American 'digital' ACU pattern; these are being replaced with a version in MultiCam.
G2a: AMCU camouflage pattern

H1: Combat medic, Australian Medical Task Force; Pakistan, 2010
This medic is operating as part of Joint Task Force 636, the Army's response to Operation 'Pakistan Assist II'. He wears the Series 3 DPDU short-brim hat and shirt, and a brassard with the national flag patch and a Geneva Cross. His equipment is limited to a commercially purchased Camelbak water bladder.
H2: Infantryman, recon/sniper platoon, RAR; Australia, 2004
With camo-paint on his face, and on his rifle (permitted at this time only to SOF and members of RAR recon/sniper platoons), this patrolling soldier wears a bush hat and uniform in DPCU pattern. He carries the LAND 125 Field Pack Large, its components also made in DPCU pattern though in varying shades. The 66mm M72A2 Light Anti-tank Rocket strapped to the side is also roughly camouflage-painted.
H3: Gunner, 1st Field Regiment RAA; Afghanistan, 2011
This artilleryman is deployed with the British 7th (Para) Regt, Royal Horse Artillery as part of British 16 Air Assault Bde for Operation 'Herrick XIII' in Helmand province – a posting reflected in his remarkable collection of sleeve patches. He wears Series 3 DPDU with the Modular Combat Body Armour System (MCBAS) developed for Iraq, but his weapon is the British 5.56x45mm L85A2 with a Grip Pod forward grip/bipod.
H3a & 3b: British RA and RHA 'drop zone flash', above NATO ISAF patch (right sleeve, on pocket flap and pocket).
H3c & 3d: Australian Army 'rising sun' on desert-camo oval, and subdued 16 Air Asslt Bde patch (above left-sleeve pocket, and on pocket). Between these H3's pocket flap also bears the familiar full-colour 'flag/AUSTRALIA' patch, as on figure H1.

An SOTG sniper photographed in 2010. His .338 Blaser is strapped to his pack, while he carries an M4A5 as his personal weapon. Just visible below the IR-reflective national flag patch on his sleeve pocket he has inked blood-type and allergy advice for the guidance of medics. (Courtesy Commonwealth of Australia, photo Cpl Chris Moore)

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Dedication

To the 41 Australians who lost their lives during Operation 'Slipper' in Afghanistan, Australia's longest war.

Author's Note

This is not the first time Osprey has visited the Australian Army; but John Laffin's original Men-at-Arms 123, *The Australian Army at War 1899–1975*, was published 37 years ago, and Kevin Lyles's masterly Elite 103, *Vietnam ANZACs*, naturally concentrates only on that war. Since then, the Australian Army has changed immeasurably. This book looks at the 'long peace' between the draw-down of Australian forces in Vietnam, through the 'peacekeeping years' of the 1980s and early 1990s, until the recent era of non-stop operational tempo that began with the East Timor deployment in 1999, and continues even today in Iraq and Afghanistan.
For obvious reasons of space, many areas which deserve their own volume are given only brief mentions here. This book focuses purely on Australian Army combat arms on active duty, the history of those deployments, their structure, battle dress, weapons and equipment. Readers seeking details of dress uniforms and ceremonial traditions are directed to the superb *Soldier: Uniforms of the Australian Army and the soldiers who wore them* by Dr Phillip D. Rutherford (2017). Other recommended books are also included in the Select Bibliography.

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Artist's note

Readers may care to note that the original paintings from which the colour plates in this book were prepared are available for private sale. All reproduction copyright whatsoever is retained by the publishers. All enquiries should be addressed to:
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The publishers regret that they cannot enter into correspondence upon this matter.

Abbreviations and acronyms used in this text

AATTI	Australian Army Training Team Iraq
AATT-V	Australian Army Training Team-Vietnam
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AMTG	al-Muthanna Task Group (in Iraq)
ANA	Afghan National Army
APC	armoured personnel carrier
ASLAV	Australian Light Armoured Vehicle
ATGM	anti-tank guided missile
ATV	all-terrain vehicle
CER	Combat Engineer Regiment
CIMIC	civil-military cooperation
COIN	counter-insurgency
CRV	combat reconnaissance vehicle
CSM	company sergeant-major
DPCU	Disruptive Pattern Camouflage Uniform
DPDU	Disruptive Pattern Desert Uniform
HQ AST	Headquarters Australian Theatre
IED	improvised explosive device
MTF	Mentoring Task Force (in Afghanistan)
MRTF	Mentoring & Reconstruction Task Force (in Afghanistan)
NZSAS	New Zealand Special Air Service
OC	officer commanding
OMLT	Operational Mentoring & Liaison Team (in Afghanistan)
OWBG	Overwatch Battle Group (in Iraq)
PMV	protected mobility vehicle
RAA	Royal Australian Artillery
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment (regular infantry)
RESPFOR	Response Force (multinational, in East Timor)
RTF	Reconstruction Task Force (in Afghanistan)
SASR	Special Air Service Regiment (Australian)
SECDET	Security Detachment (in Iraq)
SF	special forces
SFTG	Special Forces Task Group
SOF	special operations forces
SOTG	Special Operations Task Group
SRV	surveillance & reconnaissance vehicle
2iC	second in command
TNI	Indonesian armed forces
TRV	tracked reconnaissance vehicle
WO	warrant officer